



Do not help the Syrian rebels; that which helps jihadists hurts U.S.

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Does the state department terror alert mean I shouldn't travel?

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Photo: Todd DeFeo

Thursday, August 8, 2013 - Sightseers' Delight by Todd DeFeo

Todd DeFeo



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ATLANTA, Aug. 8, 2013 — The U.S. Department of State's recent travel advisory asking Americans to remain vigilant for possible al-Qaida terrorist attacks in the Middle East and North Africa begs a question.

The alert, which comes less than a year after the Sept. 11 attack on a U.S. diplomatic post in Benghazi, Libya, runs through Aug. 31. The specific threat remains somewhat vague, and federal officials haven't offered much clarity on the precise nature of the threat.

"The U.S. Government remains highly concerned about possible attacks on U.S. citizens and U.S. facilities, businesses, and perceived U.S. and Western interests," Jen Psaki, a State Department spokeswoman, said during a Tuesday press briefing.

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So, should travelers rearrange schedules or cancel plans?

Not necessarily. Regardless, travelers should remain alert and “adopt appropriate safety measures to protect themselves when traveling,” as the State Department suggested.

“Staying home and putting your head under the covers is not a good option, but neither is pretending the world hasn’t changed. It has,” advice columnist April Masini told Sightseers’ Delight. “Travelers have to remain vigilant and patient and they have to balance hope with reality.”

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But, Dr. Carole Lieberman, a psychiatrist and author of *Coping with Terrorism: Dreams Interrupted*, says travelers need to remove any denial they may have that terrorism is a real threat.

“Travelers should break through their denial about the very real dangers of terrorism, and defer all travel that isn’t absolutely necessary in order to heed all State Department warnings,” Lieberman told Sightseers’ Delight.

“Yes, this may mean losing money on non-refundable travel purchases and a disappointing change in vacation plans, but this is not the time to be a risk-taker,” Lieberman added. “And if it turns out that there is no terrorist attack, on the date or place you were planning to visit, then be grateful that lives were spared — including your own.”

It’s been a rough few weeks for travelers, and much of the consternation caused by headline-grabbing events wasn’t related to terrorism.

Last month, three people were killed when an Asiana Airlines flight from Seoul, South Korea, clipped a seawall at the edge of the runway as it was about to land. The next day, all 10 people aboard a Rediske Air de Havilland DHC-3 Otter airplane were killed when the plane crashed shortly after taking off from Soldotna Municipal Airport in Soldotna,

Alaska.

In Europe, more than 100 people were killed in a pair of train crashes in Spain and Switzerland. In the Spanish train crash, the driver was charged with reckless homicide.

“The cherry on any traveler’s ice cream sundae is the U.S. State Department’s travel alert warning us that there is probably going to be a terrorist attack somewhere. Soon,” Masini said.

“This is causing high anxiety among travelers and the loved ones of travelers. Getting a text from a traveling relative or friend letting one know that they’ve arrived safely, means more now than ever,” Masini added. “Many parents who have teenagers flying on August college scouting trips, camp trips and visiting grandparents are checking the airline websites, unbeknownst to their kids, to make sure the planes have arrived safely, and then sending e-mails to the rest of the family to let them know the good news.”

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